AN

ORATION

DELIVERED TO THE SOCIETY

OF THE

CINCINNATI

IN THE

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS:

JULY 4, 1789.

BY

Doctor SAMUEL WHITWELL.

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1789.

AT a Meeting of the SOCIETY of the CINCINNATI of the Commonwealth of MASSACHUSETTS, held at the *Bunch-of-Grapes Tavern*, in BOSTON, *July* 4, 1789,

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT Brigadier-General H. JACKSON, Major GIBBS, Capt. NICHOLSON, Lieutenant-Colonel WINSLOW, and Capt. J. THOMAS, be appointed a Committee to wait upon Doctor SAMUEL WHITWELL, and preſent him the Thanks of this Society for his ORATION delivered this day, and requeſt a Copy thereof for the preſs.

A true copy,

THOMAS EDWARDS, Secretary.

NEWTON, July 5, 1789.

GENTLEMEN,

A *DEFERENCE and reſpect, to any requeſt of the Society, precludes every private feeling of my own, in expoſing my Oration of yeſterday to the publick eye.*

I am, Gentlemen, with the utmoſt ſincerity, your moſt humble ſervant,

SAMUEL WHITWELL.

To General JACKSON, and the other
Gentlemen of the Committee, &c.

AN

ORATION.

MY FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

THE ſmile that is viſible in every countenance—the joy diffuſed through every breaſt, and the hilarity obſerved in our publick ſtreets, plainly evince this auſpicious Day—May it be forever ſacred.—To whom then ſhall our hearts be exalted for theſe manifeſtations of divine favour, but to that Being whom we have ſo lately been addreſſing.

MAY the luſtre of this day of jubilee—this annual return of commemorating Independence, never be effaced—May diſtant ages ever remember it, and let each fond parent teach his dandling infant, that, on this day, a new Nation ſpoke itſelf into exiſtence.

MAY I avail myſelf of the candour of this audience for the imperfections that my inexperience

may

may produce, while I recal to your remembrance a few ſeries of events, that introduced this happy period.

We can none of us but be ſenſible, through what a variety of ſcenes and changes we have paſſed to obtain the enjoyment of the preſent moment.—Were we once threatened with total annihilation as a free people? Thanks be to God! this day evidences the effect of a virtuous ſtruggle—it evidences, to uſe a natural expreſſion of compariſon—*Raſhneſs in the parent, and neceſſity in the child.*

Although a ſeparation of the colonies from the mother country, from the moſt obvious circumſtances, would undoubtedly have taken place on ſome future time—few had ſagacity to imagine that this event would ſo early commence.

Britain intoxicated with a zeal for domination—tenacious of her imaginary right "to bind us in all caſes whatever"—decoyed by her thirſt for further affluence, and vainly vaunting that her protection alone was the means of our increaſing grandeur; made thoſe attempts that rouſed a ſpirit of patriotiſm never before kindled in America—From thence jealouſy became the predominant paſſion, and inſtead

ſtead of nurſing the fondling in the arms of her affection, ſhe by every endeavour ſought out new oppreſſions, and exhibited reiterated marks of her ambition for unlimited ſupremacy.—Complaints were diſregarded—the moſt humble ſupplications arrogantly deſpiſed—remonſtrances treated as inſidious, and proclaimed as treaſon—Recourſe was then had to fire and the ſword, to compel the moſt dutiful ſubjects ſhe ever had to unconditional ſubmiſſion.

PERHAPS would the rehearſal of every occurrence be, to the humane and unprejudiced breaſt, that introduced this memorable act of our national creation;—ſo often has the mind been engaged in a recollection on theſe ſubjects, and being the province of the accurate Hiſtorian, it will be as tedious as unneceſſary again to repeat them.

—SUFFICE it to ſay, that finding all efforts for a reconciliation to be vain and futile;—after appealing to the great GOD OF HEAVEN, and declaring to the world the reaſons for ſuch a momentous proceeding—the united voice of this continent aſſembled declared themſelves free and independent. Situated as we then were, unprovided with almoſt every re-

ſource

ſource except what GOD and Nature had furniſhed; this memorable decree was not only conſidered by Britain as daring and impious, but called forth the attention, and excited the aſtoniſhment of the European powers—This, my friends, was an open and a generous act, it freed us from the imputation of acting an inſidious part—it decided clearly the motives that animated us—evinced an unſhaken ſpirit of firmneſs and ſtability in our councils—gave vigour to our military operations, and enrolled our name among the catalogue of nations—Inſtead of ſubjects to tyranny, we have the rank of freemen.—Charters are in our poſſeſſion, and at our own diſpoſal—Rulers are the election of our own diſcretion; and biaſſed by no arbitrary controul, nor bribed by the allurements of ſplendid emoluments, we have the bleſſed privilege of a government of our own formation, and ſtamped with the ſeal of the community at large.

THUS being detached from the nation to which we had been annexed, it not only became neceſſary to repel the force that invaded us; but alſo to form arrangements for our political happineſs—Being immerged in the horrours of war, and the publick

mind

mind agitated and unſettled, the period was inauſpicious for this important purpoſe—A Conſtitution was therefore formed on ſuch circumſtances as was beſt adapted to the enthuſiaſm of the day, unforeſeeing the ſeveral incidents that would depend on a deficiency of power.

Errours in government, eſpecially in new States, may often be expected—Experience alone will teach us from whence they originate and how they may be corrected—May they not frequently ariſe from a want of a permanent, well grounded eſtabliſhment? And may not any ſyſtem of government, after a revolution of circumſtances, be found imperfect in operation, and require capital amendments?

Mankind, in their various ſituations in life, are endued with diſpoſitions in ſome meaſure diſſimilar, and commonly differ more or leſs as the mind is greater or leſs enlightened—capricious in their humours—new paſſions—new opinions are excited in the breaſt, and as knowledge or ignorance ſway the mental powers, ſo much eaſier or with greater difficulty may the paſſions be regulated—The ſavage Indian ſubmits with no reluctance to the verdict of his Sachem, but delivers himſelf up as a victim to

his

his will, however unnatural and barbarous it may appear.—From hence we obſerve the facility of controuling illiterate ſubjects under abſolute authority.

But a relaxation in the reins of government is as productive of anarchy and confuſion, as the deſpotick law of an eaſtern monarch is of tyranny and oppreſſion—It diminiſhes the dignity of any ſtate, has a direct tendency to deſtroy ſubordination, and on ſlight pretences introduces factions and every commotion.

Learning and Education qualify a people for the noble purpoſes of being happily governed, while ignorance renders them inattentive to their rights and prepares them for the chains of ſlavery, which ambition is ever ready to rivet.

The councils of the *Chineſe* are compoſed of men eminent for their knowledge in ethics, and from theſe are ſelected the *Mandarins* or Chief Magiſtrates who by their knowledge become ornaments to their ſtate and an example to their conſtituents—the ſubjects know no law but what is divulged by the literati, and this they conſider as divine truths, for being clad with myſtical appearances they are accuſtomed

to

to venerate and believe.*—"Can we, says a celebrated writer, be surprized if a state whose leaders are formed from their infancy to virtuous and political knowledge should stand unmoved, the unshaken wonder of passing ages, while other Commonwealths are born and die ere a comet can revolve round the sun."

AFTER such convulsions as so unparalleled a war as the last must naturally produce in the deliberations of an infant country—after such repeated discouragements in the national assembly; who can but wonder with astonishment, that those difficulties did not prove fatal and overwhelm us in distress and ruin.

FROM the want of sufficient power to execute—Have not our councils been the sport of our neighbours and the contempt of our enemies—Have not the publick edicts of that august body been little better than mere shadows of authority?—Of little avail is sovereignty in society, where influence on its members cannot be supported, and decrees though sanctioned by the most pathetick recommendations alone are annulled or adopted as the caprice and fancy

NOTE.

*Brown's estimate of the manners and principles of the times.

fancy of a ſtate pleaſes.—Government like this, is popular in a ſpeculative view, but dangerous in practice.

FEARFUL of exhibiting any appearance of deſpotiſm, at a time when every heart was animated with republican principles, the moſt rigid in their form; at a period when the cry of liberty was uſhered to the ear as the goddeſs of the country, enſigns of which were waved around as emblems of true contentment, and a name which our little offspring were taught to repeat before they could ſcarcely articulate; when all ranks of people united in ſentiment to repel every principle that ſeemed derogating from freedom, ſuſpicious of infringing their darling rights—It was wiſdom and indeed neceſſary to adapt publick conduct and meaſures to the temper and feeling of the times.—But what a train of evils, my friends, was hence generated—Our Treaſures exhauſted—Trade decaying—Credit ſinking—Our national character blaſted, and ruin and deſtruction the gloomy proſpect—Where was the ſoul that was not affected with the moſt poignant ſenſations? Where was the patriot that did not bleed at every vein, and ſhed tears of ſorrow for his expiring country.—But what do I ſay? *Expiring*—I recal the word—*Phœnix like*,

from

from the ruins of the old, a new Conſtitution is framed, adopted, and is now in operation—What proſpects of future benefits will hence reſult, I leave my anticipating audience to determine; but as your countenances beſpeak the ſentiments of your hearts, and the wiſhes of your breaſts, ſuffer me in all the warmth of enthuſiaſtick zeal, to congratulate you on this memorable era—May we proſtrate ourſelves before the great Potentate of the Univerſe, and in the ſublime language of inſpiration exclaim—"*Praiſe waited for thee, O* God, *in Zion, and unto thee ſhall the vow be performed.*"

Exalted be the thought, and elevated the idea, that Heaven has again bleſſed us with the ſervice of as eminent a Perſonage as ever dignified a throne, and who now diſtinguiſhes himſelf at the head of adminiſtration—

"See him in Senate act the Patriot's part—
Truth on his lips—the Publick at his heart—
There neither fears can awe, nor hopes controul,
The honeſt purpoſe of his ſteady ſoul."

Melmoth.

—Having reſcued his country from the potent arm of Britain, and gained the long wiſhed for and immortal prize of Peace and Independence, he re-

tired

tired to the private walks of life, with laurels of fame inadequate to his virtues—Once more has his country demanded his aid, and once more has he obeyed the ſummons—quitted his domeſtick concerns—relinquiſhed the enjoyments of an affluent fortune, and again declined every perſonal emolument.—While we venerate the character of this great man—no unhallowed incenſe can be offered to his merit—to us it belongs to render his adminiſtration proſperous.

NUMEROUS examples in hiſtory prove, that when the ſun of virtue ſets in one country, it riſes in another—Greece and Italy were once renowned for their valour and their virtue—but we now view their preſent inhabitants as contemptible as their predeceſſors were illuſtrious and great—and we may obſerve countries that were anciently obſcured and unnoticed, now beam forth as the glory and ornament of the earth—With equal parity of reaſon may we not be indulged to extend our imagination on the wing of time, and view America—that America which but a few years paſt was a lonely wilderneſs—riſing to the zenith of her luſtre—important in her councils, and impregnable in her ſtrength—reſpected and courted by diſtant nations, like the

antient

ancient miſtreſs of the world, diſplaying her grandeur throughout the Univerſe.—Flighty and fantaſtick as this thought may appear, every concurrence aſſures us, that this prediction will be ſoon accompliſhed.—Emigrations from remote as well bordering countries will immediately take place—Population increaſe—Commerce revive—Manufactures be augmented—Trade flouriſh—and the Arts and Sciences patronized.

PARDON me, if I turn your attention more immediately to this land of our nativity.—Happy has it been for this Commonwealth, that the ſupreme authority has been veſted, during its exiſtence, in thoſe whoſe prudence, integrity and virtue will ever make them renowned to poſterity.

UNDER the preſent adminiſtration ſo manifeſtly tending to the good of the State and immunity of the ſubject, it is a pleaſing circumſtance to find the firſt poſt of government filled with that long-tried Patriot, whoſe ſoul has been almoſt exhauſted in the ſervice of his country—in the darkeſt hour of her diſtreſs, when threatened with ignominy and death—his exertions were then increaſing, and ſacrificed his health and fortune to her ſupport and honour—

Eulogiums

Eulogiums are too feeble in expreſſing gratitude ſufficient to compenſate ſuch a devotion to her intereſts.

——And are we not, my friends and citizens, ſomewhat indebted to the wiſdom of our rulers, when rebellion had made ſuch rapid ſtrides as to ſap almoſt the foundation of the Conſtitution, and overthrow juſtice and good order—when the ſpirit of the people was ſtirred up by malevolent feuds and contentions under an idea of alarming oppreſſions—when animoſities had ſo far increaſed as to invade the ties of conſanguinity itſelf, and friendſhip among neighbours in a manner ceaſed—Guided by firmneſs and ſteadineſs, in council—the great philoſopher and ſtateſman who then held the reins of government, exerciſed the powers veſted in him by the Conſtitution, with ſuch judgment and deciſion as to diſpel the impending clouds that appeared to be ready to burſt over our heads and involve us in ruin—This important tranſaction being effected under the conduct and execution of a General whoſe intrepidity was no leſs conſpicuous than his humanity—the happy faculties he poſſeſſed of eradicating the prevailing ſentiments of jealouſy and envy, mollified the deluſion and ſpared the ſword of juſtice—To an heart ſteeled againſt all the feel-

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ings of compaſſion and every tender emotion of the ſoul, and familiarized to the horrours of a civil war; What devaſtation and havock would have been the conſequence!

NOTHING in my opinion has a greater tendency to promote happineſs and eſtabliſh human affairs than concord and unanimity, which like a cement in a building connects all things together both in publick and private ſociety—"*Parvæ res concordia creſcunt*," is a motto as applicable as it is juſt.

BUT after all the promiſing objects that imagination has in view—however alluring our anticipation of future felicity may be—Will not diſappointment frown on our endeavours, if virtue in the people is ſtill wanting?—Without this, all the efforts of the moſt judicious Congreſs that can be elected will eventually fail: Unleſs a fortitude to repel every voluptuous exceſs be embraced as the great eſſential principle of rectifying errours, a Conſtitution framed in Heaven and ſtamped by the authority of the Almighty Law-Giver himſelf, can anſwer no purpoſe, without his ſacred fiat.—The manners are the objects of reform, and a thorough change can no way be effected either in politicks or morality without a fixed and determined reſolution of amendment.

INDUSTRY and frugality muſt be adopted as the means of our political ſalvation—Extravagance of all kind aboliſhed—the diſtaff and the ſpindle muſt be aſſiduouſly employed.—The barren wilds of America cultivated and made fertile and economy in every branch rigidly attended to—An introduction of foreign luxuries will degenerate us to ſlavery, and the ſyren charms of pleaſure and fancy will indelibly mark the eſcutcheons of our country with ſhame and diſhonour.

LET every heart unite—let every nerve be ſtrained for the common good.—May we not hope and find our hopes realized that perſons of every denomination will be ſtimulated and not remain in inactive ſpectators of the great drama which is opening—a ſcenery, which by the vigilant exertions of the citizens to virtue, will enlarge the happineſs of millions now in action, and millions yet unborn.—To the holy Ambaſſadours of Heaven have we been indebted for their attention in the publick concerns—their's it is to inculcate piety and promote virtue from the ſacred deſk—and when performing the venerable functions of their office—when extending their voices to the great GOD OF HOSTS in our behalf—May we not truſt that by their "precepts and exam-

ples

ples taught," we ſhall purſue the paths of honour, virtue and glory, and finally have the ſolid ſatisfaction of having done, and well done, what we had to do.——And now,

MY FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS,

THE pleaſure we enjoy in once more aſſembling together, to expreſs our congratulations on this anniverſary, ſurpaſſes almoſt every exceſs of feeling—and could we tranſport ourſelves through the ſpace that is between our ſeparate brethren on the continent, and join at each feſtive meeting this day; What ſympathetick cheerfulneſs! What kindred ſentiments of love and affection would ſuch a ſcene produce!

To recollect paſt events is indeed pleaſing, but to rehearſe thoſe, which we have been particularly intereſted in, is doubly delightful—Themes like theſe affect the mind with the moſt tender ſenſations, and while they charm the ear, they paſſionately move the heart.

We are a ſociety of friends—friends in the hour of the moſt trying difficulties, and the firmeſt friends in the repoſe of peace.—If any from a miſtaken opinion have formed objections prejudicial to the inſtitution—if the ſycophant fawning at the foot-

ſtool of popular applauſe—allured by the unſettled judgment of a few, and from ſiniſter motives even diveſting themſelves of the common rights of perſonal friendſhips; have deferred their connection with us—let us on the one hand endeavour to prove that our views are pure and diſintereſted—while on the other we view their conduct with an affectionate pity.

The evening tide of life is faſt approaching—a few more days will remove us from the theatre of action—Annually do our numbers diminiſh, and we ſhould do violence to our own feelings if we did not indulge the emotions of grief, and afford every tribute of reſpect that is due to departed merit.—Although the melancholy duty of contemplating the death of our friends, is a ſubject unſuited to the joy and feſtivity of the day, yet fraternal affections demand a dedication of one moment to their memories—Are we bewailing the loſs of thoſe that the common courſe of Providence has occaſioned? And can we forbear offering ſome acknowledgments of ſorrow at the ſhrine of thoſe deceaſed heroes, who bled and died by our ſide?—Forbid it Heaven!—Obligations to their deſerts claim our utmoſt attention; and it would be ingratitude to their manes to craſe them from our minds.

Macedon

MACEDON mourned her great ALEXANDER—*Spain* her intrepid ADOLPHUS—We lament not the ambition of a tyrant ſlain, nor the mercenary ſlaves of a prince, but we mourn with an affectionate zeal and compaſſion our patriotick friends, who unfortunately fell unrewarded for their labours.—Doubtleſs they anticipated the joys which we experience—doubtleſs their ideas ſoared to the ſummit of human wiſhes—May we drop the tears of affection over their urns, and enroll them in the records of our conſtant remembrance.

THIS is not all—On the baſis of charity is this inſtitution formed—Let us then mitigate the widow's tears and the orphan's cries—not content with the ſimple—*Be ye cloathed, and be ye warmed*—but teſtify real evidences of our affection and duty.

WHEN I look around and obſerve many who have eſcaped the fatal effects of battle with memorable ſcars of their immortal bravery, it will not, I truſt, too ſenſibly affect the feelings of delicacy, or ſavour of adulation, to venerate ſuch conſpicuous characters.—Who are objects of greater gratitude from their country? Who more deſerve a requital for the important ſacrifices they have undergone—and can our land, now repoſing under the ſmiles of

Peace

Peace and Independence, purchaſed at the expenſe of a fractured limb or a diſmembered body; be unmindful of the offering—they cannot, my friends, unleſs loſt to every ſenſe of honour and acknowledgment—may we never deſpair of thoſe benefits, that a grateful people will undoubtedly beſtow—and in return may the efforts of our hearts, and the firmneſs of our ſtrength be exerted for the ſecurity of the government—Did we by our duty in the field, relinquiſh our rights as citizens? No, we return to our former capacity, and join in the general aim to promote the welfare of ſociety—let each in his different occupation ſtrive to encourage a ſpirit of amity and good-will—diffuſe a ſubmiſſion to legal authority—and by all his words and actions manifeſt a ſincere attachment to our excellent Conſtitution—

* "By honour rul'd, with honeſty your guide,
Be that your bulwark, and be this your pride;
Increaſe the fed'ral ties—ſupport the laws—
Guard publick faith—revere religion's cauſe.
Thus riſe to greatneſs, by experience find,
Who live the beſt, are greateſt of mankind."

NOTE.

* *Col.* HUMPHREY'*s Poem on the Happineſs of America.*

FINIS.